

# Shakespeare Shares attention with the New Plays.

## What Causes the Tugs at the Heart Strings in the Plays?

Some Observations on 'The Right to Strike' and Other Plays' Real Estate and Art Often Combine in Drama.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

MAYBE there would have been a greater sense of reality in "The Right to Strike" had the drama been less polemical, not necessarily in form but in its very nature. When the railroad employees discuss the pro and con of their case with the representatives of the company one hears with singular detachment, considering the ardor of their pleadings, the familiar theories on the subject. Even at a joint debate, in which the listener may have no direct personal interest, the blood is likely to flow faster on one side or the other makes its points. There is the interest of every contest in the struggle.

But even this interest is missing in the long debates of the second and third acts of Hutchinson's play. Unconsciously are the listeners aware that these words are not expressive of the convictions of earnest advocates, but are merely the speeches the actors have learned. Thus is even the inspiration of deep feeling denied to them. In the absence of deliberate dramatic intent there is nothing for the audience in witnessing "The Right to Strike" to fasten its interests on.

Yet there could easily be had the dramatist written with more imagination. If there were in a scene of the English drama of capital and labor a line written with the beauty that Gerhart Hauptmann imparted to his



Miss HELEN FREEMAN in "The Great Way" Park.

Miss LOUISE GROODY in "Good Morning Dearie" Globe.



LIONEL ATWILL who will appear in "The Grand Duke" Lyceum.

Silesian epic of the proletariat, some responsive glow might come from the listeners.

Even the commonplace nature of the text might have been forgiven in some suggestion of poetic insight into the hearts of these people who were talking like gramophones about their wrongs. But through the stolid picture of the characters and the more or less stilted idiom of their speech there shone no enkindling ray of fancy. It is easy to say that poetry and imagination have no part in a drama that has its feet deep in such practical questions as food supply and increased wages rates. Yet it would have imparted a sense of reality to the play, which was missing when it was most necessary.

It is not by any means certain that a play may at once propound political doctrine and serve its dramatic purpose. None seems to have done it so well as "The Weavers" although the playwright there had the advantage of an earlier period and a picturesque scene. Then the teachings of labor and capital are not to be reconciled, as Mr. Hutchinson so glibly tried to do at the end of the play.

With the rights of the working man ringing in the ears as one deputations shouts them and the excuses of capital as their advocates, on the other hand, promulgate them from the other side, the listener cannot accept a conclusion which begins with an explanation of what happened two thousand years ago at Galilee. In other words, there has been no experience to justify the belief that the teachings of Christianity have been successful in settling strikes at any time. Mr. Hutchinson weakens his play therefore in throwing the settlement of his problems on a principle of belief instead of working them out as they would have been in life.

To invoke the Golden Rule so that the physicians may treat the engineers just as they would be treated by them, and thus restore economic calm, is very comfortable and orthodox and English, but it is not in the least logical. It is unfortunate for the enduring force of "The Right to Strike" that the playwright exercised his powers of imagination at the wrong time.

Caught in "Jam." One of the most interesting plays that the fruitful season has brought forth almost disappeared from the view of this indifferent metropolis the other day, although it attracted the immediate admiration of all who saw it. Its departure, had it really gone, would have been one of the little tragedies of the year. Luckily public appreciation of its qualities spread so far that the drama has become one of the successes of the year.

Why did its qualities make their appeal so slowly? There was no change



Miss EVA LE GALLIENNE and EVELYN CHARD in "Lilom" Fulton.

In the quality of the performance. It remained the same during its two weeks of comparative neglect that it is at present. Did the fact that it arrived here simultaneously with five other new plays have any effect in delaying its appreciation?

Certainly there has been little or no coddling of the dramas that have lived and died here this year. They have been thrown with a Spartan gesture before the public to stand or fall. When five or six of them were put before the public it is surprising that it took time to acquaint playgoers with their quality? It is more to be wondered at that they ever discovered what they were like.

The close relation between art and real estate had been discovered before the astute Yvette Guilbert emphasized the message. Plays usually end their runs in New York as well as in other cities on Saturday nights. Usually they are able to reach New York in time to open on Mondays. So high have the rents of New York theatres become that the delay of even one night is accounted by the managers an unjustifiable risk.

Even if there are to be, therefore, half a dozen plays on the same night the postponement of any one involves a preliminary loss which few entrepreneurs are willing in these troublous days to undertake. In addition to the possible loss on the sale of tickets there is the rent of the theatre for one night.

It happens that the lessees of the playhouse will not consent to share the loss of one night with the producer of the play. In more ways than one it is made difficult if not impossible for the producing manager to postpone until he has free for his enterprise an evening without rival entertainment.

Perhaps, after all, there would be no sure advantage from the lack of competition. The managers must be supposed to know their own business better than anybody else. Perhaps after all it does not really count in the long run whether or not the first performance attracts all possible attention. Managers believe now in exposing the infant on the mountain top. If it has the qualities to survive, the mere detail of its first production will not be decisive.

If, on the other hand, the breath of life is not in the infant, nothing in the world can put it there. No extraneous circumstances can make it survive sturdily. Let it take its chances therefore and save itself if



Miss FRITZ VON BUSING and AL DOLSON in "Dumbo" at Dolson's 59th Street Theatre.

possible. Probably this method is correct. The managers would never have adopted it otherwise. But it is old fashioned in any case, it is adapted better to the little antique world and nobody will deny that it is an advantage to any play that its presence and its whereabouts moreover are impressed on the public.

### Actresses Who Sing

It is always interesting to see a prima donna in a play. They are so unlike the species in real life, exotic as that may be. Who remembers the soprano in "Pagans" who sang "Marguerite" at a matinee of "Faust" at the Metropolitan Opera House and then went about to the shops, took tea in a studio or two and showed no signs whatever of the fatigue that might reasonably have resulted from the artistic effort of the afternoon?

Gilda Varesi touched lightly on the artistic responsibilities of her heroine and showed in the foreground her emotional life. In "The Six Fifties" the soprano is described as singing "Tosca and Manon and Marguerite". Since her name was Christine Palmer there was the vague suggestion of our own Geraldine Farrar. But when it was also mentioned that she sang "Isle" that clue failed.

What contemporaneous singer ever possessed such a comprehensive repertoire that it could include both the Massenet and the Wagner heroine? Speculation stumbled and then gave up the job. Only a stage prima donna could have such catholic vocal cords.

There is much entertainment in the dining car episode of the first act of Kate Maurin's play. Sleeping cars have furnished humor from the days of Mestayer's "The Tourists" down to George Monroe and the Winter Garden. But there is almost novelty in the struggles of the eating tourists, and certainly a great deal of human nature is there.

The playwright imparts no false values to the menu even if she does mix up her opera. Singularly enough the acts that follow the first have a strong suggestion of the dramatic methods of Rachel Crothers. Not only does the dialogue in the second scene of the first act suggest Miss Crothers, but there is a further reminder of her stagecraft in the later passage of the play.

Maybe this mental impression merely survives from the knowledge that Miss Crothers wrote a very successful play about a railway wreck. Then Miss McLaurin's "The Six Fifties" has

so many of the familiar Crothers merits that the analogy will make itself felt. The writer of this department has always refrained from any mention here of the relations between the two parties in the theatre of this country to-day. What was Equity and what was the other thing he neither knew nor cared. Elsewhere in *The New York Herald* he was, however, rashly intruding enough on a province not in the least under his jurisdiction. Vengeance came quickly in the form of the following letter from Howard Kyle:

Kyle:

A number of our members have been much disturbed by what you said in the *Sunday Herald*, October 16, about our league, to wit:

"A loyal member of the Fidelity decided that he would not defer to the 'closed shop' demand of the Equity, but would recruit his company altogether from actors who boast of their allegiance to the Fidelity. Well, he was loyal to his principle, but at what cost to his own interests?"

"Of course we know to whom you refer. You have probably been misin-

## Calendar of Theatrical First Nights

### MONDAY.

CENTURY THEATRE—E. H. Sothern and Miss Julia Marlowe will begin their season of Shakespeare with "Twelfth Night." The company includes Frederick Lewis, Rowland Buckstone, Miss Alma Kruger, Sydney Mather, Albert Howson and Frank Peters.

### TUESDAY.

LYCEUM THEATRE—David Belasco will present Lionel Atwill in "The Grand Duke," a Parisian comedy by Sacha Guitry. The English version is by Achmed Abdullah. With Mr. Atwill will appear Miss Lina Abarbanel, Miss Vivian Tobin, John L. Shine and Morgan Farley.

GLOBE THEATRE—Charles Dillingham presents his new musical comedy, "Good Morning, Dearie," written by Jerome Kern and Anne Caldwell. Miss Louise Groody is the lead player, the others including Oscar Shaw, Harland Dixon, Miss Ada Lewis and William Kent, Maurice and Miss Leonora Hughes, John Price Jones, the Sixteen Sunshine Girls—a John Tiller troupe—and Reisman's Orchestra.

GAITY THEATRE—"Golden Days," a comedy of youth by Sidney Toler and Marion Short, with Miss Helen Hayes in the leading role and a cast composed mostly of boys and girls, will be presented by George C. Tyler and A. L. Erlanger. Besides Miss Hayes herself, these stage youngsters include Donald Gulliver, Miss Selena Royce, Miss Ruth Harding, B. Eden Thompson, Robert Fiske, Miss Jean May and Russell Medcraft. The adult characters are played by Misses Minna Gale Haynes, Blanche Chapman, Florence Earle and Camille Pastorfild.

### WEDNESDAY.

VANDERBILT THEATRE—Arthur Hopkins will present "Anna Christie," a revised version of "Christie" a play by Eugene O'Neill tried out earlier on the road. The principal parts will be played by Miss Pauline Lord, George Marion and Frank Shannon.

formed, as the exact truth of the matter is that the actor you have in mind tried—as Mr. Miller had done and Mr. George M. Cohan and others—to maintain an 'open shop' company. In the instance you have in mind the actor-producer found when he tried out the new play on the road that he was in disagreement with the author and others interested in the management as to the suitability of three actors for their respective parts. In one or two cases he admitted that he had made mistakes in judgment, which is not uncommon with producers in casting for a 'tryout.'

"Our complaining members contend that the effect of your printed comment amounts to a misrepresentation of the league's resources. This, I have every reason to believe, was far from your intention. The labor union of actors has persistently placed every possible obstacle in the way of those independent producers who seek to have 'open shop' casts."

"Mr. Miller, however, succeeded in securing a cast for 'The Famous Mrs. Fair,' which has been receiving unstinted approval in every city in which he has appeared this season and, as you may know, he is at present playing in New York on the 'open shop' principle."

"Regarding Mr. Cohan, 'The O'Brien Girl,' as you know, is playing successfully despite the declaration on the part of the labor union leaders that it would never be permitted to play in New York on the 'open shop' principle."

"No one can deplore more than we the situation now existing in the theatre of America. In a written statement to the league, which Mr. George M. Cohan gave me on the eve of his departure for Europe last Wednesday, appears this paragraph:

"The actors who have allowed themselves to be hoodwinked into the belief that 'closed shop' in their profession is a good thing, are just beginning to realize that we of the open shop policy are on the right side of the street, and it is only a matter of time when they'll start crossing over to walk alongside of us and thank us for the stand we took and the principles for which we stood, and still stand, firmly and proudly."

The writer desiring to make the fullest reparation that net the slightest effect of this lesson may be lost on him cries "Pecavi" at the top of his time worn lungs and solemnly vows that he will never again be led under any circumstances to mention in his moments of consciousness either the E— or the F— Basta.

### TO PRESENT "HINDLE WAKES."

The Brooklyn Theatre Guild announces for its first production of the season Stanley Houghton's "Hindle Wakes," which never has been produced in this country by a Little Theatre group. There are a limited number of vacancies in the ranks of active members. Those interested may address the Brooklyn Theatre Guild, 254 Avenue C, Brooklyn.

## DID YOU HEAR—?

That Mr. Shubert Wants to Get Theatre Prices Down and About Hollywood Etiquette?

By LUCIEN CLEVES.

LEE SHUBERT thinks he has found a way of meeting the lukewarm attitude of the public toward the theatres this season, and indeed toward all forms of amusements.

"It is my conviction," he said to the reporter of *The New York Herald*, "that the price of diversion must be lowered as much as possible in accordance with the high standards that prevail everywhere in the American theatre. There is an entirely obvious unwillingness on the part of the public this year to spend money on the theatres, or indeed on any of its pleasures. There are, of course, many possible explanations for this state of mind."

"But it does exist. So it is the business of the theatre managers to make allowances for it. I have decided therefore to keep down prices as low as we can and yet maintain the Shubert criterion. I am seeking in every way to make the price scale adapted to the needs of all events the disposition of the public. I think that only in such a way may the people be once more brought back into the habit of going to theatres as they have been during recent seasons. Luckily we have our chain of vaudeville theatres, which is able to meet this new mood of the public on one side. But I am not content with only this kind of diversion and am extending my efforts to every branch of our enterprises."

### The Butler's Views.

The nephew of the bishop, who had gone out West to elevate the movies for a consideration, was at once regarded as an authority on social usage. He was called upon to settle many knotty problems which vexed the directors. None was more complicated for them than the arrangement of the guests at the modish dinner party. Whom did the host take in? On whose arm should the hostess enter the dining room? How were the guests of honor disposed about the board of the millionaire? The fashionable recruit rose valiantly to the occasion. He told them from all the wealth of his experience in the great world just how and when and whom. The director, apparently tamed at last, listened and took notes.

At last the rebellious movies had deferred to something else than the sovereign rule of one of its own little mandarin. Society had given its cooperation to art or science or whatever the cinema happens to be. Something was going to be done right at last. Social usage was not to be as grotesque as it usually is on the screen.

The next morning the arbiter of manner arrived at the studio. There was none of the respect which had attended thickly his departure the night before. Indeed the director barely nodded at him, and he had settled all the difficult questions for them.

"You know, you was all wrong about that dinner party stuff," said the director when he finally condescended to speak. "It's a good thing we didn't shoot any pictures on that bull. We got the real dope, however. Now we know how a dinner party really ought to look."

"What was started a gasp the astonished nephew of the bishop. "What?"

"Oh," continued the director, "we just found a man that knew. That was all. Last night I talked with Douglas Fairbanks' butler, and he put us wise. But you, boy; why you was all wrong!"

### Music Had Its Charms.

While the managers are complaining that there is something lacking of perfection in the public support so far this season the impresarios of musical events are, on the other hand, looking upon them as rather fortunate men. They consider the coyness of the public in the musical year has been much more discouraging. Indeed, the reports from the cities outside New York are enough to prove disquieting to the metropolitan agents who send their artists over the country.

In New York the majority of concert givers expect nothing more than the opportunity of appearing before the public of the largest city of the country. They make their money outside the city. When audiences in these places fail to turn up, why the clock is, to say the least, discouraging. Such has been the attitude of the public outside New York this season. Nothing has impressed the coyness of the public in the matter of music so strongly on the New York managers as the frequent cancellations of concerts already booked. A considerable percentage of concerts already arranged for have been given up as the date approached merely because the paying public failed to indicate any interest in them.

### Mr. Davenport's Way.

Harry Davenport has a perfectly well thought out method of inducing the standard of dramatic performances which he has so far been unable to impress on the theatre managers. Even John Golden, who has been in the role in "Thank You," him the leading performer in this sure fire method of making performances just as good as they might be, although Mr. Davenport has talked so much about his scheme that the actors are expecting to be called any day to the Longacre Theatre.

"I think a moving picture made of every scene in a play would be of incalculable advantage in improving the representation," he said the other day, "and the cost to a manager would be negligible. By having every scene photographed and thrown on the screen, the players could in this way tell every point in which their acting failed to live up to the standard of their ambitions. They could see every gesture and every expression that was wrong, so relentless is the camera in revealing the actors minutely."

"By showing this picture at intervals to the company it would be possible to tone up the performance. Little tricks or omissions that had crept in during the run could readily be observed and corrected. The second companies could be trained from this picture. In other words, it would be a cheap method of keeping up the standard to the highest mark. But somehow I have never been able to make a manager see the advantage of the idea."

### "DEAR ME" IN THE BRONX.

Sentiment and melody are blended in "Dear Me," comedy with songs, in which John Golden will present Miss Grace La Rue and Hale Hamilton at the Bronx Opera House this week, with the original Republic Theatre supporting cast. Hamilton and Luther Reed wrote it.

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